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Media statement by South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. A.B. Nzo, on South African assistance in demining activities in Mozambique, issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Cape Town, on 18 February 1998

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Alfred Nzo, today announced that South Africa will assist Mozambique in a demining project which will provide vital impetus to the reconstruction and development of the Massingir Dam region in Gaza Province. It has been agreed with the Mozambican National Demining Commission, (CND), that the South African company Mechem, which is already engaged in the demining of the Maputo Province in its "Terra Limpa" (cleaning of the earth) project, will be utilised for this purpose. Elaborating on this decision, Minister Nzo said:

"The African Development Bank has committed US $80 million toward the rehabilitation and upgrading of this key area in Southern Mozambique. South Africa has committed itself to providing the necessary assistance in the demining of the Massingir airstrip and strategic access routes which are of critical importance to the Mozambican government's macro economic development strategy".

Commenting further on South Africa's role in actively assisting Mozambique in its own reconstruction and development strategies, Minister Nzo pointed out that "Terra Limpa" (cleaning of the earth) has been a cost-effective and successful bilateral project, which includes the clearing of 163 ha of land and destroying 5000 mines, thus unlocking the agricultural potential of the Currumane Dam region for man and animal. Minister Nzo confirmed that South Africa and the Mozambican Demining Commission had also agreed to jointly address the critical need for the funding of a comprehensive technical survey of the national landmine problem in Mozambique. This included possible South African assistance to landmine victims, the secondment of personnel to the Mozambican Demining Commission (CND) and the training of ten Mozambicans in advanced demining management. This training programme will assist Mozambique to significantly improve its indigenous demining capacity. The eight week training course will commence on 23 February 1998, at Paardefontein outside Pretoria, at the Mechem International Demining and Canine Training Academy.